

# US Counselor to discuss ways to ‘advance Dhaka-Washington security partnership’

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**Online Desk:** Counselor of the US Department of State Derek Chollet will meet senior officials in Bangladesh to discuss “coordination and response” to the Rohingya refugee crisis, strengthening cooperation in international fora, and advancing the “security partnership” between Dhaka and Washington. Chollet, who is scheduled to arrive on Tuesday afternoon, will have a breakfast meeting with Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen on Wednesday where Bangladesh will raise its priority issues. During his 24-hour stay, Chollet will meet Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen Wednesday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs apart from his other engagements in Dhaka, officials said, reports UNB.

The US Counselor serves at the rank of under-secretary as a senior policy advisor to the US secretary of state on a wide range of issues and conducts special diplomatic assignments as directed by the secretary. Bangladesh saw a series of senior US officials visiting it in recent months with the last one by US Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Donald Lu. The US sees “huge potential” in their relationship with Bangladesh and a lot of “room to grow.”

Counselor Chollet will lead a US delegation to Bangladesh and Pakistan on February 14-18 to meet with senior government officials, civil society members, and business leaders to highlight the importance of their bilateral partnership and reaffirm their shared goals, said the office of the spokesperson at the US Department of State. He will be joined by Clinton White, Counselor of the US Agency for International Development, and Elizabeth Horst, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs at the US Department of State, and, in Bangladesh only, Beth Van Schaack, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice.

Bangladesh said the visit of the US counselor will help strengthen its relations with the US. “The purpose of his visit is to strengthen the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the US,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Seheli Sabrin told reporters recently. Sabrin said Chollet will also discuss the Rohingya issue. Bangladesh is hosting over 1.1 million Rohingyas in Cox’s Bazar and Bhasan Char. “It is a remarkable journey – 51 years. We are interested in deepening the ties,” said the US counselor ahead of his visit.

Talking at the television talk show “Tritiyo Matra” online, the US counselor said he is coming to talk to senior officials and private sectors in Bangladesh to discuss ways to deepen the ongoing cooperation between the two countries. Mentioning that the US places democracy and human rights at the heart of their foreign policy, Chollet said Bangladesh is such a good long-standing friend, and they have “very frank exchanges” about the concerns they have. The issues related to the Rohingya crisis and the overall security in the Indo-Pacific region are likely to get priority during his visit. “We are deeply concerned about the situation in Myanmar which is only getting worse,” said Chollet.

The US wants a solution to the Rohingya crisis, and the solution lies in Myanmar but instability is growing inside Myanmar. The US counselor said they are doing whatever they can in cooperation with Bangladesh and trying to ease the pressure on the country from the refugee crisis by providing critical assistance to it to support its humanitarian needs, also with efforts to try to bring some of the refugees back to the US. There are “a whole host of issues” that the two countries can work together, said the US counselor.